

Just A SPOONFUL...



BREAKING UP is truly hard to do – especially when our relationship with salt dates back for millennia. Throughout history, salt has been an essential part of the human experience.

A bonafide commodity, salt has been taxed, traded, hoarded, and stolen. Every paycheck we collect is a tribute to salt. The Latin phrase “salarium argentum,” meaning “salt money,” referred to the payment made to Roman soldiers and forms the root of the English word “salary.”

Of course, the sodium in table salt is essential to life. It allows the body to maintain its ionic balance and to retain water to keep the cells hydrated. We have specialized salt-sensitive taste buds on the tongue, so we're wired to seek out salt.

No wonder it's so hard to stop sprinkling, pinching, and dashing it onto our food.

However good and essential salt may be, too much of it can be dangerous. A high-sodium diet not only increases the risk of high blood pressure – and subsequent heart attack, kidney disease, and stroke – but possibly also osteoporosis and kidney stones (by increasing the excretion of calcium into the urine).

Continued on page 4

MONEY IS A TOP CONCERN

WITH THE DECLINING ECONOMY making daily headlines, eight out of 10 Americans are reporting that the economy is a significant cause of stress and nearly 50 percent of Americans are concerned about whether they'll be able to provide for the basic needs of their family, according to the American Psychological Association (APA) Stress in America annual survey released in October 2008.

According to the survey, many people are experiencing stress-related physical and emotional symptoms like sleeplessness (52 percent) and irritability (60 percent). Unfortunately, as stress levels increase healthy behaviors often decrease. Some people overeat or eat unhealthy foods (48 percent), while others skip meals (39 percent). Yet others use alcohol to take the edge off stress.

Here are some tips to help you deal with stress during these uncertain times.

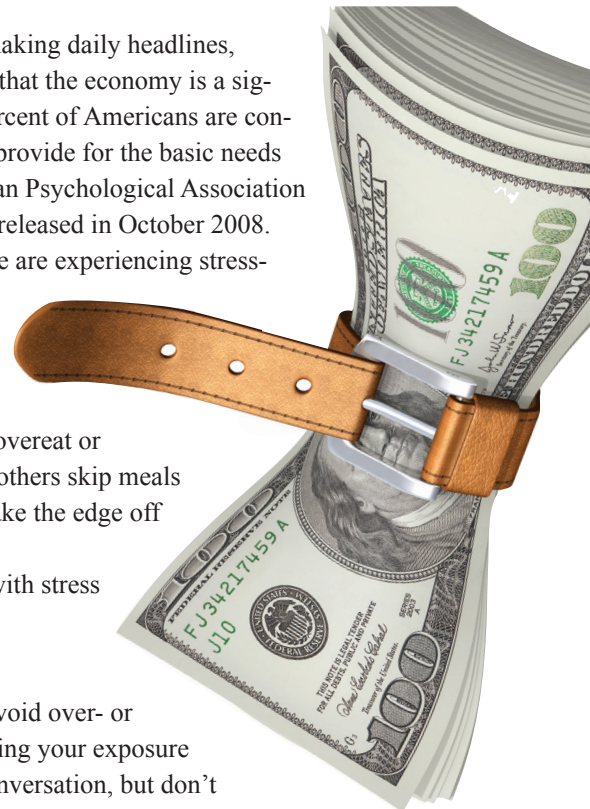
DON'T PANIC

There are real reasons for concern but avoid over- or under-reacting. Control anxiety by limiting your exposure to negative hype on television and in conversation, but don't avoid dealing with problems that arise. Be proactive and seek support wherever it's available.

PLAN REALISTICALLY

If you're having trouble managing debt, take stock of your situation, make a plan, and put it on paper. It may be hard at first but making a solid plan reduces stress in the long term.

Continued on page 2



Federal Occupational Health (FOH)

The Occupational Health Provider of Choice for the Federal Government

The mission of FOH is to improve the health, safety, and productivity of the federal workforce. Created by Congress in 1946, FOH is a non-appropriated service agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). FOH offers a full range of occupational health services—including Clinical, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Work/Life, Organizational Development, and Environmental Health and Safety programs—exclusively to federal employees.

Visit FOH on the Web at www.foh.dhhs.gov, or call 800-457-9808.

The SCOOP



>>Mediterranean Diet Reduces Stroke Risk

Mediterranean-style diets seem to protect against heart disease and stroke, according to Harvard School of Public Health researchers who analyzed 20 years of dietary data from 74,866 women as part of the Nurses' Health Study.

A Mediterranean-style diet is not difficult to follow because you don't have to give up foods you like. Compared to a traditional western diet, a Mediterranean diet contains less processed foods, more plant-based sources of daily protein like beans and nuts, oily fish at least once per week, chicken a couple of times a week, and red meat and pork only a few times a month. Healthy plant oils are also an essential part of this diet so it's not considered low-fat.

Source: Mediterranean diet and incidence of and mortality from coronary heart disease and stroke in women. *Circulation*, February 16, 2009, available at: <http://circ.ahajournals.org>.

>>Dieters Beware

In January 2009, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expanded its warning about tainted weight-loss products that contain certain undeclared pharmaceutical ingredients, which may cause cardiovascular side effects. The FDA found that some weight loss products – often marketed as dietary supplements containing natural or herbal ingredients – contained **sibutramine, phenytoin, phenolphthalein, and bumetanide**.

Sibutramine, a prescription drug to treat obesity, may cause tachycardia, palpitations, hypertension, stroke, and seizures. Phenytoin is an approved antiseizure medication, and bumetanide is a diuretic. Phenolphthalein was in some over-the-counter laxative products until the FDA reclassified it as “not generally recognized as safe and effective.” The FDA is currently seeking product recalls.

Press Release: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01933.html>.

Continued from page 1

TAKE STOCK

How do you relieve stress? Do you increase unhealthy activities? Do you overeat, drink alcohol, or use tobacco? Do you keep to yourself and avoid topics and activities that make you anxious? Do you become irritable and occasionally snap at others? Such coping styles can become ingrained like habits but like habits, they can be changed. Consider scheduling a consultation with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help you modify your coping styles.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Be creative by finding healthy and economical ways to reduce stress. Take up walking, substitute eating out with cook-at-home gatherings, find a hobby, or learn a skill that will engage and interest you.

REACH OUT

Your FOH EAP provides free financial counseling with a certified financial consultant. The EAP is also available as a stress management and reduction resource.

FEDERAL INFORMATION LINKS

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.hhs.gov>

Healthier US

<http://www.healthierus.gov>

MyPyramid.gov (USDA)

<http://www.mypyramid.gov>

National Diabetes Education Program

<http://ndep.nih.gov>

National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nih.gov>

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

www.ahrq.gov/consumer

Weight-Control Information Network

<http://win.niddk.nih.gov>

Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative

www.organdonor.gov

Healthfinder.gov

www.healthfinder.gov

NATIONAL HEALTH OBSERVANCES

MARCH 2009

March 1 - 31

National Kidney Month

National Kidney Foundation

www.kidney.org/kidneydisease/kidney-month/index.cfm

March 1 - 31

National Nutrition Month®

American Dietetic Association

www.eatright.org

APRIL 2009

APRIL 1 - 30

National Donate Life Month

Division of Transplantation (HRSA)

www.organdonor.gov

APRIL 1 - 30

Alcohol Awareness Month

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information Administration

ncadi.samhsa.gov

Getting to PIE



Your workplace EAP is available to help you and your family manage a variety of issues. See the contact information on the back page.

A COLLABORATIVE WORKPLACE runs smoothly. On the other hand, no matter how talented or skilled, if employees cannot reach consensus it can disrupt the entire workplace.

The key is to learn skills that foster *positive interpersonal encounters* (PIE). The value of PIE is as important as ever now because in today's multicultural and multigenerational workplace, managing conflict and getting to collaboration and consensus requires skill and sensitivity. The implication of PIE as well as its mathematical parallel is that positive social behavior is circular – what comes around really does go around.

Here are some tips for getting to PIE.

SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND PERSPECTIVE

Observe your reactions in workplace situations. Are you focused on yourself, or can you identify with the other person? Social perception is the ability to be observant of others' cues in social situations so you can evaluate their reaction to you and the situation. Perspective taking is the skill that allows you to put yourself in another's place, identify with them, and try to view a situation from their point of view. Practice being sensitive to your impact on others and be prepared to adjust if your impact is less than positive.

COOPERATION

Put team objectives over personal interests, keep an open mind to the suggestions of others, and allow yourself to be influenced by others.. It seems simple but four out of ten employees are not able to work cooperatively with other employees. You'll need social perception and perspective-taking skills to excel at cooperation.

EMOTION MANAGEMENT

Emotions are contagious. People tend to "catch" each other's moods. Negative emotions can change the quality of communications, which can become more hostile and lead to misunderstandings, distortions, and conflict.

Learn emotional self-management. By controlling your facial expressions, vocal tones, and body language you'll convey a positive outlook and motivate others as well as yourself. It may not seem "genuine" but it is a valuable skill taught by customer service and sales organizations to improve employee/customer relations. Over time, and with practice, it becomes more genuine because showing positive emotions can eventually lead to feeling more positive.

NOT-SO-SMALL TALK

More than simply water cooler misdeeds, small talk – the friendly exchange of pleasantries – is the social cement that seals workplace cohesiveness. Fundamental for team functioning, these (short) exchanges portray friendliness and consideration; promote emotional attachments; and maintain the bonds of goodwill between employees. Reach out and develop your conversational/small talk skills.

Develop the skills that will increase PIE and you'll improve work relationships, lower stress, improve career success, increase on-the-job satisfaction, and improve team performance.

For more on how to improve work relationships, call your FOH Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 800-222-0364. Conflict management and other seminars are available at low or no cost.

Count SLEEP Not SHEEP



TROUBLE GETTING a good night's sleep? You're not alone. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), one in three adults experiences occasional insomnia – the inability to fall asleep and/or stay asleep – and one in ten suffers from chronic insomnia.

It's not surprising that sleep issues are becoming more problematic considering we're a 24/7/365 culture. With the World Wide Web, round-the-clock cable, and the virtual workplace it has become a progressively sleepless world.

If you're tired of counting sheep, there are a few options. Medication can help, but it has drawbacks. Most over-the-counter sleep aids contain antihistamines, which may leave you groggy in the morning. Prescription sleep aids are usually safe if taken as directed. However they don't normally produce a natural, restful sleep and there are always some risks when taking sedatives. If you would like to avoid medication, there is another alternative – a proven prescription is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

The American Psychological Association's (APA) reviewed the accomplishments of Duke University's Sleep Disor-

ders Center in its December 2008 issue of *Monitor on Psychology*. At Duke, experts in behavioral sleep medicine are using CBT to help insomnia patients regain their ability to sleep.

One such expert – sleep psychologist Jack Edinger, PhD., who is with the VA Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina and is a Professor of Behavioral Sciences at Duke – has developed a CBT treatment protocol that helps people permanently break habits that work against healthy sleep. For example, most people with chronic insomnia are stuck in an endless cycle. They compensate for sleeplessness by napping or sleeping late on weekends, which backfires by disrupting sleep routines. Then, anxious about not getting enough sleep, they can't relax at night.

The goal of CBT is to create new sleep habits. Edinger helps people get in control by breaking bad habits, such as consuming alcohol or tackling stressful work before bed, and setting regular bed and wake times.

Download the NIH guide to healthy sleep at: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/healthy_sleep.pdf.

Continued from page 1

According to the Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans most adults should consume no more than 2,300 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day – roughly one teaspoonful. People with high blood pressure should have no more than 1,500 mg. In reality, the average American consumes more like two to three teaspoons a day.

Sodium in the diet comes from several sources. Sodium may be found naturally in food or may be added during processing, during cooking, or at the table. On average, about 11 percent comes from adding sodium while cooking or eating. Another 12 percent comes from natural sources. The majority – a whopping 77 percent – comes from prepared or processed foods.

To cut down on salt, you'll have to make changes in all three areas:

Retrain Your Taste Buds. Cut down on salt at the table and in cooking. Experiment with different spices to enhance foods. After around three months, most people don't miss salt.

Read Nutrition Labels. Products labeled "sodium free" must contain 5 mg or less per serving. A "very low sodium" product will have 35 mg or less, and a "low sodium" product should have 140 mg or less.

Pass on Processing. Processed foods are very high in sodium. Avoid or limit cured meats (bacon, ham, hot dogs, etc.) and deli meats. When buying deli meats select low sodium meats.

Rinse Food. Rinsing canned fish and vegetables can reduce the sodium by up to 30 percent.

Be Careful at Restaurants. One restaurant meal can easily provide a full day's quota of sodium. Request that dishes be prepared without or with low salt, and request sauces and dressing on the side.

Monitor Medications. Be sure to read the labels. Some over-the-counter drugs such as antacids and laxatives can contain up to 300 mg of sodium.

Learn more about reducing sodium at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/sodium/sodium.htm>.

FOH FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The FOH Federal Consortium EAP provides assessment, counseling, referral, training, and consultation to federal employees and agencies throughout the United States. For administrative details about the program, contact Jeffrey Dunlap at 301-443-7589 or e-mail at jdunlap@psc.gov. To visit us on the Web, go to www.FOH4You.com.

Help is available all day, all week, all year.
800-222-0364, TTY: 888-262-7848

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